the affair of General Kornilov. He is a good man, a brave soldier, a Russian patriot, but the results of his attempt to save Russia have been bad. I asked myself, 'What was his mistake?' And I think I have found the answer. A military commander must not undertake such a thing. The initiative must come from a civilian. Am I right, Mr. Commissar?"

"The civilians in the government and the Executive Committee are doing their best to restore order in the nation and discipline in the army," I said, not very convincingly.

"They are not doing the proper thing," Scalon replied sadly. "All authority and all responsibility must be in the hands of a single man—a man whom the people will trust and the army will obey. A dictator must come from the army, but not from the ranks of commanding officers."

"You mean, from the ranks of enlisted men? From the army committees?" I asked.

"No. Just as soldiers would not accept a general as a ruler, so officers would resent having an enlisted man put over them. I am thinking of men who command respect of both sides . . . such as the front commissars. . . ."

"Remember that Savinkov, a commissar, was backing Kornilov," I said, "but that did not help him."

"I am not thinking of fakers who come to the front to play politics, but of those who joined the army to strengthen it and who understand both soldiers and officers. . . . I am thinking of you, Mr. Commissar."

"Thank you most sincerely, Mr. General," I replied, "but you are on the wrong track. If the people in the army trusted me, that was because I had no political ambition. Moreover, I have neither will to power nor skill in maneuvering among political groups and parties. In short, I have none of the attributes of a dictator. What I am doing is as much as I can contribute to the defense of Russia."

The general remarked, "I was afraid that would be your answer. But I was not sure and wished to try." After a moment of silence he added, a little stiffly, "I hope you will not consider this conversation improper. Please forget it."

"No!" I said. "I shall remember it with gratitude to you for your confidence. But this I promise you—nobody will learn of our conversation."

We returned to my car in silence, shook hands, and I drove back to my office. This was my last conversation with the general.[13]

[13] When I wrote an account of these days in the early 1920's, I omitted this incident. Now, after forty years, I no longer feel bound by my promise. General Scalon died soon after this conversation. After the seizure of power by Lenin in